

LifeGroups

LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

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LIFEGROUP TRAINING

WHAT IS REAL LIFE'S MISSION FOR LIFEGROUPS?

Our mission is to promote _____ through life-giving small groups to empower people to take their next step in following Jesus.

What Are LIFEGROUPS?

People doing LIFE together.

L – _____

I – _____

F – _____

E – _____

I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of. (John 10:10)

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

He who stays away from others cares only about himself. (Proverbs 18:1)

"The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community*

YOUR LIFEGROUP

We were created to live in community.

Our content: _____

Our context: _____

1. A place of _____.

Yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him. (1 Corinthians 9:22)

2. A place of _____.

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

3. A place to _____.

Let your roots grow down into Him, and let your lives be built on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. (Colossians 2:7)

WHY ARE LIFEGROUPS IMPORTANT?

1. _____ happens best in the context of relationships.

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

2. At Real Life, we believe our church must grow _____ and _____ at the same time.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. (Acts 2:42,46)

3. Real Life is a church ____ small groups rather than a church ____ small groups.

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. (Acts 5:42)

4. LifeGroups provide the _____ functions of the church and the personal touch that people need, especially in crisis.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

LIFEGROUP LEADERS ARE AN EXTENSION OF OUR PASTOR'S HEART FOR *PEOPLE*

LIFEGROUP LEADERS ARE AN EXTENSION OF OUR PASTORS HEART FOR PEOPLE



LIFEGROUP LEADERS look to their COACHES. Coaches look to their CAMPUS PASTOR. Campus Pastors look to our LEAD PASTOR.

Organization of LifeGroup Coaches (Four Main Categories)

1. Men's Coach
2. Women's Coach
3. General Coaches
4. Student Ministry Coach

HOW CAN I BE A LIFEGROUP LEADER?

LEADER EXPECTATIONS

1. Set a _____.
2. Be a _____.
3. Invest in the _____ of your group members.
4. Invest _____ faithfully to Real Life.
5. Communicate _____ with your coach.

EVERYONE IS A MINISTER

The pastors and teachers responsibility is _____ and build up the church, the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:12)

ESPN MINISTRY

E – _____

S – _____

P – _____

N – _____

HELP YOUR GROUP TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN THEIR WALK WITH CHRIST

Know the state of your flocks, and put your heart into caring for your sheep. (Proverbs 27:23)

Their next step may be something Real Life already has available:

Encourage them to consistently attend a church service.

Encourage them to get water baptized.

Encourage them to attend The Next Step.

Encourage them to serve in a ministry.

Encourage them to invite others to attend service with them.

YOU ARE COMMITTING TO ONE LIFEGROUP SEASON

1. You get to choose _____ and _____ your group meets.
(Someone's home, apartment, restaurant, office etc.)
2. Groups will meet weekly on a _____ calendar.
(Fall: from the week after Labor Day to the second week of December)
(Spring: from the last week in January to the second week of May)
3. You, the leader are committing to a _____ semester.
4. If your group takes a break in the summer, please plan one social gathering event each month.
(i.e. June, July, August, Christmas party as an on ramp for new people to connect)

WHAT ARE THE BASICS? (NUTS AND BOLTS)

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

1. Pray for your group _____.
2. Email or call _____ the meeting.
3. Create a life-giving atmosphere (_____ and have _____!).
4. _____ other leaders and _____ other tasks.
5. Email, text or call anyone who doesn't attend the day after the meeting.

ESSENTIALS (based on an hour meeting)

1. Fellowship (10 minutes)

2. Bible Discussion (40 minutes)

(Let your coach know what curriculum you want to use. We have so many options on rightnowmedia.org &

Follow the Message) // 4 P's: _____ / _____ / _____ /

_____ to change direction

3. Ministry and Prayer (10 minutes)

AVOID

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____ speakers or material
4. _____ Topics

YOUR GROUP MEMBERS BIGGEST FEARS

1. Someone is going to call on them _____.
2. Someone is going to call on them _____ their story.
3. Someone is going to ask them _____ the Bible aloud.
4. Someone is going to ask them _____ question.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO AS A LIFEGROUP LEADER IS TO _____ FOR THE MEMBERS OF YOUR LIFEGROUP.

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

YOUR NEXT STEP

1. DON'T BE AFRAID, YOU CAN DO THIS!
2. MEET WITH YOUR COACH ASAP
3. FILL OUT YOUR LEADER APPLICATION AND HONOR CODE

APPENDIX

A SUCCESSFUL LIFEGROUP

SUCCESSFUL: *What Does Community Look Like When Done Well?*

Loving God, Loving People // All of God's commands were summarized by this and it is our measure for how we are doing. If our LifeGroups are helping others grow in their love for God and others, then they are serving their purpose.

Imagine a group where it's apparent that the group members have been looking forward to meeting together because they know they are loved by the group. Members eagerly inquire about the week, asking each other specific questions. Time is spent actively praying for each other's needs and the lost. At any time, any group member could speak at length to the current spiritual state of any other member in the group, and members care for each other in practical ways such as hospital visits and providing meals to members in need. The group is a web of interconnectedness that includes evenings spent together, phone calls and e-mails, lunches and late nights & barbecues. When the Bible is discussed, group members have insightful comments and applications that reflect a diligent study of the Word.

In group time, there is a sense of urgency to talk openly about what is going on with daily struggles. It is a place where real problems are addressed and highs and lows are shared openly and examined closely by each other. It is also a place where, through open sharing, issues are identified and members are equipped and held accountable for responses. The Bible is used to bring insight and wisdom to discussion, and members address practical application to help with marriages/dating relationships, parenting, purity, work, stewardship, and other issues. There is an unhindered sharing of knowledge and wisdom that can only happen by the Spirit of God.

NOT SUCCESSFUL: *What Does Community Look Like When Done Poorly?*

Community done poorly does not consistently foster the type of life change that Christ promoted.

- A **supper club** where members gather together weekly, but fail to engage in authentic conversations regarding who and where they are.
- A **Bible study** where members meet to talk about God's Word, but don't talk about how to apply God's Word to real-life issues and genuinely grow spiritually.
- A **counseling session** where members gather to talk about issues and struggles, but do not integrate Scripture into the discussions or make time for one another outside the group to develop deep friendships.

THE THEOLOGY OF LIFE GROUP LEADERSHIP

The foundation of effective biblical leadership is a relationship with Christ. Before you can lead well it is imperative that you are following Christ. You can only lead others to follow Jesus if you are following Jesus. *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.* (1 Corinthians 11:1)

What Is Biblical Leadership?

Biblical leadership is influencing and motivating others to become more fully devoted followers of Christ. It requires a passionate, genuine commitment to follow Jesus, love others, and serve those around you.

FOLLOW JESUS	"And He was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'" (Luke 9:23)
LOVE OTHERS	"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)
SERVE OTHERS	"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

Biblical leadership carries a serious weight and responsibility. It is not to be taken lightly. Just as Paul exhorts Timothy, so should you "set the example for other believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity." (1 Timothy 6:11-16)

What Does Effective Life Group Leadership Look Like?

"The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you." (Philippians 4:9)

As the leader, it is your responsibility to shepherd others, model authenticity, and foster relational trust. Here are several practical steps:

1. Pursue Christ (Philippians 3:8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust in the Lord. (Proverbs 3:8) • Practice obedience to experience Christ. (John 14:21) • Study and meditate on Scripture. (Joshua 1:8, 2 Timothy 3:16)
2. Live with integrity (Acts 24:16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your word. (James 5:12) • Know your character weaknesses. • Know what you could fall to. (2 Samuel 11-12)

<p>3. Find your significance in Christ, not men (1 Thessalonians 2:4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strive to please the Lord, not men because He will evaluate our work. (2 Corinthians 5:8-10) • Don't be deceived by the praise of men, rather allow it to be a test to discover where your devotion lies. (Proverbs 27:21)
<p>4. Stay focused on the goal and prize (Philippians 3:14)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to pursue full devotion to Christ, don't become distracted. (Proverbs 4:25-27)
<p>5. Live humbly (Micah 6:8)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride is a danger full of dire consequences. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (James 4:6) • The Lord hates pride and arrogance. (Proverbs 8:13)
<p>6. Increase your effectiveness (1 Timothy 4:14-15)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on core strengths. • Prioritize and execute. • Understand you are not learning just for yourself, but for the benefit of others. • Seek wise counsel for big decisions, but do not over analyze small decisions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek reconciliation and restoration (Matthew 5:24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand from the beginning that you will make mistakes, you will hurt feelings, and you will need to ask forgiveness from others in the group. • Accept responsibility whenever appropriate and seek reconciliation. • Make every effort to restore relationships that have been damaged or broken. • View conflict as an opportunity for growth. <p>1. See the "Lord of the Ring" conflict resolution resource for additional detail.</p>
<p>8. Foster an environment of relational trust (John 13:34-35)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to consistent meeting • Modeling openness and honesty • Encouraging healthy accountability • Do what you say you will do, acknowledge and ask for forgiveness when don't

"Many leaders fail to tend to themselves, and are eventually unable to serve others. They are starving intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. When they do read their Bibles, or listen to CDs or tapes, it is always for someone else. They are always preparing some Bible study for a group or message for others. They read for 'program,' not for personal growth, and neglect to consume the nourishment or apply it to their own lives. Their 'talk' is great. Their 'walk' becomes fake. They go through the emotions, but aren't really spending time eating the 'bread of life.' They are spiritually starving... so close to food, yet never eating."

CREATING AN ENCOURAGING ENVIRONMENT

Starting your group well is crucial to the initial and ongoing success of your group. We have provided a list of topics to cover that will help guide you through the "starting-a-group" process:

First six weeks:

- Create an environment that fosters relational warmth and depth.
- Clean the room you will meet in and the bathroom (Think of how clean Buc-ee's are)
- Play worship music (Think coffee shop)
- Have a "host" mentality. (Make a connection with each person not just one or two)
- Promote authenticity. (Start with you being your best self)
- Align expectations. (Tell everyone the plan before you start, i.e. "hey we are going to be done at . . .")
- Prepare for and facilitate effective meetings. (Your attitude will set the tone for the meeting)
- Understand and handle group situations. (You are the leader and can guide conversations)

Creating an Environment is Impacted by Interactions Outside of Group Meetings

Doing life with people is more than spending an hour during group time. As a leader, your function is more than simply facilitating or teaching a group. In the first six weeks, we are asking each leader **to make a significant relational investment in people**. It is important for the leader to invest heavily in creating and nurturing relationships, especially during the first six weeks. One of the best ways to initiate relationships is to provide opportunities for members to connect outside of group time. A few ideas include:

- Go to breakfast or lunch together.
- Call individuals during the week or send a text or e-mail.
- Share life stories informally (i.e., over a meal) or formally (i.e., during your LifeGroup meeting).
- Sit together at church.
- Host a game night for your group.
- Do a service project together.
- Host a potluck dinner.
- Attend a sporting event together.

HOW TO PROMOTE AND CARE

As a LifeGroup leader, God calls us to a “host” mentality and as the leader, to encourage the members in your group to do the same. Fellowship and Care are so important, but aren’t intuitive to everyone.

Dr. Tim Elmore explains the role of host well in the following excerpt from his book *Habitudes #2*:

Hosts and Guests

Leaders take the initiative in relationships. They are intentional about them. They see themselves as hosts, not guests, and go out of their way to connect with people and provide for them.

It has been said that “some folks make you feel at home, while others make you wish you were.” If you want to be a great “host” in relationships, you’ll need to do the following things.

1. **Initiate.** *Good hosts make others feel like the most important person in the room by:*
 - *Inviting the members of your group to spend time outside of group time.*
 - *Asking probing questions and showing a genuine interest in others.*
 - *Looking for the member on the outskirts and making an effort to draw them into the group.*
2. **Connect.** *Good hosts do their best to help others feel comfortable and at ease. They’re always trying to find common ground with others by:*
 - *Being willing to listen to others.*
 - *Finding a common interest and investing in the relationship through that interest.*
 - *Creating opportunities to share experiences together (e.g., serving the homeless).*
 - *Being available when needs arise.*
3. **Provide.** *Good hosts meet the needs of those around them and look for ways to benefit them.*
4. **Direct.** *Good hosts know that others are looking to them for clarity on which way to go. Hosts provide guidance by:*
 - *Organizing, setting expectations, scheduling meetings, and sending reminders.*
 - *Giving resources and instruction based on past experience.*
 - *Helping others do a “self-discovery” on their own, guiding them along the way.*
 - *Placing others in contact with key people to help them on their journey.*

HOW TO PROMOTE REAL RELATIONSHIPS

The goal of authenticity in LifeGroups is to become more like Christ. As the leader, you must take the first step of trusting the group by sharing your own walk with Christ. Sharing should include spiritual growth areas, wounds and insecurities, wins and celebrations.

To get started, here are some suggestions:

- Create a safe environment in which members are comfortable sharing and understand the importance of sharing. (James 5:16)
- Model sharing for group members (e.g., share daily encounters, the condition of your spiritual walk, your need for accountability), be open about where you are and where you want to grow.
- Ask group members open-ended questions (e.g., What is the one area of your life in which you want to be more like Jesus?).
- Model the pace of sharing (e.g., a member sharing too much too soon versus a member never sharing).
- Keep prayer requests personal and specific.
- Allow others to pray, without putting anyone on the spot. Remember that some group members have never prayed in front of others.
- Be authentic and real with what you share, resisting the temptation to exaggerate or embellish.

One way to promote real, healthy relationships is to set expectations for the group.

Aligning expectations is the act of asking group members what the goals, objectives, and purpose of the group will be, and then comparing those expectations to what God says about biblical community.

The first step in the process is to **paint the picture**. Spend time as a group walking through what community looks like from God's perspective. (Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 3:12-14)

Once your group understands what the Bible says about the importance of community, **initiate a conversation and ask questions**. Some questions to ask your group may include:

- What level of authenticity is everyone committed to? (e.g., Are we willing to discuss finances, marital issues and other potentially sensitive topics?)
- One year from now, what does success look like for this group? (i.e., What life change have we seen?)
- What are the priorities for the group? (i.e., What are the expectations concerning attendance, participation, child care, etc.?)
- What are the group's expectations about getting together outside of the regularly scheduled group time? (e.g., lunch after church, service projects, dinner once a month, birthday celebrations)

Be sure to **talk through how the group will be structured**. Each group will be a little different, but listed below are a few of the most common ways to structure a LifeGroup. Don't be afraid to tailor your time depending on your group's needs.

HOW TO LEAD A LIFEGROUP

Think of yourself as a facilitator. Facilitating a meeting can be intimidating, but good facilitation skills are a vital part of a successful LifeGroup. Here are some useful tips from *The Small Group Leaders Training Course* by Dr. Judy Hamlin:

1. **Listen.** Physically and emotionally focus on the person who is talking; convey your interest and intention to listen. Face the person to whom you are listening; lean forward if you're sitting, relax and maintain good eye contact. Use brief phrases like, "yes, really?" and "interesting" to show the speaker you are attentive. Listening is an art and is just as important to effective communication as speaking. (James 1:19)
2. **Draw others out.** Use questions with members who have not spoken recently and with those who have good ideas or opinions. The use of first names is important. Examples: "Mary, what do you think about the second question?" "Joe, I'd be interested in your opinion on this subject."
3. **Clarify.** Misunderstanding can arise when we assume we understand a speaker's meaning. When the meaning is unclear, ask a question for clarification. Examples: "I'm not sure what you meant. Would you please restate that?" "Could you repeat that and say a little more about what you mean?" Clarification is complimentary because it shows a speaker you are listening and attentive.
4. **Paraphrase.** A listener restating a speaker's thought or idea in his own words demonstrates careful listening and concern. Examples: "This is what I heard you saying Is that correct?" "Mark, your central concern is" "David, your reactions seem to be"
5. **Probe.** This involves asking people to give reasons for what they have said and should be done in a positive, non-argumentative way. Examples: "Help me understand that a little better by pointing me to what God has to say about it in His Word." "Why do you say that?" "Help me understand what the connection is between what we were discussing and your comment?"
6. **Redirect.** When a group member continues to address all his questions and comments to the leader rather than to the group, redirect the questions to the group. Use the group members' names to encourage them to talk with each other. If Mary continues to focus on the leader, the leader might respond, "Tom, what do you think about Mary's last question?" "How would you answer that, Tom?" This is particularly effective in involving new members in the discussion.
7. **Extend.** This involves adding to or expanding a line of thought in a discussion. After an answer is given, or a comment made, the leader might ask, "Does anyone have anything to add to what has been said?" or, "Is there anything else someone would like to comment on at this point?"
8. **Summarize.** At various points in the group discussion, it is helpful to briefly summarize and highlight what has been previously said. This technique works effectively when a group gets bogged down because it outlines where the discussion has been and should be going.

9. **Affirm.** It is always important to recognize and affirm the person who is talking. To one you might say, "Thank you for your comment." To another you might add, "That's an interesting point." Be slow to ever tell a person he is wrong. Simply redirect the question to others: "What do the rest of you think?" Even when a comment seems unimportant, the speaker is still important.
10. **Be concrete and personal.** Use "I" messages instead of "you" messages. Communication improves when members take responsibility for their own ideas and feelings, using the personal pronoun "I." To say, "I feel," or "I think," is much more direct and helpful than, "Some people think," or "Some believe."
11. **Be application oriented.** When a discussion seems too general, vague or abstract, an "application question" helps keep the conversation more direct and specific. Examples: "How would you apply that?" "How would what you are talking about affect you personally?" "Have you ever struggled with this issue yourself?" "How does this Scripture affect your daily life"

HOW TO HANDLE DIFFICULT PEOPLE OR GROUP SITUATIONS

There are several common challenges that can arise within the group. We have outlined a few symptoms and solutions below. Remember to process all issues and questions on the basis of Scripture rather than opinions.

SYMPTOM	SOLUTION
Quiet member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask clear and concise questions. • Direct easy questions to quiet member by name. • Enlist the help of others to draw him / her out. • Express appreciation for contributions he/she makes. • Have quiet member read passage aloud. • On an application question, break into smaller groups of 2 or 3. • Allow time for silence before asking another question too quickly. • Never force a member to participate. • Be patient, gentle, and affirming.
Overly talkative or dominant member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to them privately about the need for silence after some questions for thought and reflection; help them see the group's purpose. • Ask for his / her help in drawing the silent ones out. • Direct questions to people by name. • Suggest the person ask, "What does anyone else think?" • Sit at 90 degree angle and avoid eye contact. • Say "Thank you, I think someone else might like to share, too."
Member who monopolizes group with his / her problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the person privately • Help group see its purpose (Bible study groups are not therapy groups). • Continue in prayer and loving support.

Disagreeing member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to find the cause (e.g., is the person sheltering a deep hurt?). • Give feedback to the person who disagrees: "What exactly causes your hesitation?" • Challenge the group with the choice of holding back (no risk) or going ahead (with risk but also growth) by asking, "How can we get around this objection?"
Conflict avoidance from member to keep group peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the person doesn't have a biblical view of community and is avoiding conflict. • Talk to the person privately and help him/her see that he/she is burying honest interaction leading to resolution. • Reassure person that it's okay for people to disagree on some issues.
Superficial sharing from member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open in your own sharing. • Break down in pairs for sharing, application, and prayer. • Meet outside the group to find out interests, opinions, and ideas. • Remind the group that the Bible is written to individuals. Ask: "How will you know Scripture is convicting you?" "What should we do about this?" "How should we live in light of this?" "What might we do this week to apply this?"
A member won't go deep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask "why" questions. • Play devil's advocate (e.g., take the opposite position, make them defend). • Meet with member outside of group time to deepen the relationship and increase the comfort level.
A controversial question is raised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set some ground rules before the discussion; remember that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We acknowledge that Christians hold different views on the topic; - All viewpoints must be supported by Scripture; - We are not going to settle this questions for all Christians for all time today; - Focus on what the divergent beliefs hold in common.
A member is argumentative and obstinate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your composure, don't take things personally. • Examine what is being said and try to find the good in it (bring them alongside you). • Visit one on one to see if this is a personal problem, communicate that their ideas are important, but that the behavior can't continue.
Lack of prayer time or stifled prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan time for prayer in lesson planning (e.g., pray at the beginning of group time). • Pray prayer requests rather than sharing then praying. • Break down in smaller groups to pray. • Pray one sentence prayers, stating praise, confession, requests, and thanks. • Read a Psalm or pray from the Bible.

A difficult question is raised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't be afraid to say "I don't know." • Offer to find an answer and report on it next time. • Open the question up to the group. • Assign members the task to research the question, give guidance for references to use. • Call your community director for help/insight.
An "incorrect" answer is given	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that sometimes the person is more important than the answer. • Note whether the response is truly wrong or just an opinion that differs from the leader. • Affirm the person's willingness to share, but then continue the questioning process; see if you can bring the person around to the "correct" answer. • Ask: "What does someone else think?" "Does someone else have experiences along that line?"
A tangent arises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the tangent, but gently bring group back to the topic: "That's a great topic, but let's table that for the time being." Then bring the group back to the topic by reviewing and summarizing where the discussion got lost. • Use a key word (e.g., bunny trail) to remind the group they're on a tangent and gently pull the group back to the topic.
Group apathy, confusion or complaints of wasting time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide agendas and systematic approaches to discussions, making sure a clear constructive purpose is fulfilled at each meeting. Remember to incorporate the functions of a small group (purpose, worship, service, people). • Ask for evaluation from group members and allow them to take some part in planning group time. • Display enthusiasm and energy.
A member of the small group tends to "bug" or "rub" you the wrong way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray for this person. • Ask God to change your heart for the person and let you see them through His eyes. • Step back and let the Holy Spirit work in both of you, love them as an act of faith and obedience.
Personality clash between group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize points of agreement. • Help each side to clearly understand the other. • Talk individually and corporately. • Team them up for group project (e.g., plan a service project for the group together).
Members come late	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a definite time that is workable and agreeable to the group members. • Begin each time promptly. • Discuss time with group: "We're having trouble getting going. Is it too early? Do we need to change the time?"

GROUP LIFE: ONGOING GROUPS

We hope your group goes beyond the 14 week semester and decides to continue doing life together.

If this happens, your group will likely experience seasons of intimacy and complacency throughout your time together.

REAL RELATIONSHIPS GROW FROM GENUINELY LOVING OTHERS

Partnering with your group means having a God-given concern for others that propels us out of our comfort zone and imitates the way Christ loved and cared for others.

Focus on the "One Another's" of Scripture

We call the following verses the "One Another's" of Scripture because they paint a picture of what we are called to and how to live a life that is others-centered.

"One Another's" of Scripture		
Love One Another	We are called to love each other.	1 John 4:11
Seek Counsel from One Another	As the leader, ensure all counsel given reflects Scripture.	Matthew 18:16; 1 Corinthians 6:1-4; Proverbs 11:14, 14:7, 15:22, 18:1-2, 18:15, 19:20, 24:6, 28:26
Speak Truth to One Another	Love someone enough to speak truth, even when it isn't comfortable (hint: learn how to incorporate tactfulness).	Proverbs 12:19, 24:11, 24:26, 25:12, 27:6; Zechariah 8:16-17; James 5:12; 2 Timothy 4:2; Psalm 141:5; Ephesians 4:1-3
Pray Continuously for One Another	Care for the members of your group by consistently praying for them.	James 5:16; Mark 10:45, 11:24; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Corinthians 10:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
Serve One Another	Be others-centered.	Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10; Mark 8:6-7; Acts 2:45, 4:32-35; Exodus 17:12-13; Romans 15:25; Titus 3:14
Encourage One Another	Be an exhorter, build up each other.	1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11; Hebrews 3:13, 10:24
Be available to One Another	Make time for others.	1 Thessalonians 2:8; Proverbs 27:10; Acts 4:32
Submit to One Another	Consider others first.	Ephesians 5:21

Be devoted to One Another	Be devoted to others in love.	Romans 12:10-11
Spur On One Another	Encourage others towards love and good deeds.	Hebrews 10:24
Accept One Another	Accept others as Christ accepted you.	Romans 15:7
Forgive One Another	Forgive others as Christ forgave.	Ephesians 4:32
Bear One Another's Burdens	Carry each others burdens.	Galatians 6:2
Regard One Another	Regard others in humility.	Philippians 2:3
Be Responsible for One Another	Have a brother's keeper mentality.	Ezekiel 33:6-9; Proverbs 24:11-12; 1 Peter 4:10; Ephesians 4:16, 5:11-14, 5:21; Galatians 6:1-2; Philippians 2:4

Develop Deep Relationships

Our hope is that your community group goes from casual friendships to experiencing deep love and care for one another. We are asking each leader *to make a significant relational investment in people to create relational trust*, which is a key to developing deep relationships. Those kinds of relationships within your community group will allow you to have a support system of love and encouragement for celebrating victories and processing life.

As the leader you can help create a welcoming and fun environment by encouraging members to engage with one another outside of formal group meeting times and by making your community group relationships a personal priority (Hebrews 10:24). A few ideas to help foster that environment include:

- Call group members between meeting times (e.g., have lunch, breakfast, etc.).
- Keep track of group members' important dates and events (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries).
- Be "others" focused—have a host mentality.
- Be creative and strategic in planning events.
- Be flexible but firm in emphasizing the importance of spending fun times together.
- Ask for help and delegate when you need help.
- Respect members where they are, but encourage them to share and join in the fun.
- Have a good ice-breaker question or game prepared when you need it.

Create opportunities to help build unity within the group. A few ideas for activities include camping, birthday get-togethers, sporting events, State Fair, bowling, fishing, whirly ball, game night, boat outing, concert, picnic, museum, and vacations.

Experience Authentic Sharing

As the leader, it will be your responsibility to model a lifestyle of authenticity. A few helpful hints include:

- Model transparency and authenticity by sharing your story and struggles with the group.
- Don't force anyone to share.
- Be okay with silence.
- Balance speaking truth with grace.
- Encourage group members to shepherd each other.
- Fight for unity within the group and church by giving encouragement and dealing with conflict as it arises.

As we move toward caring for others and partnering for spiritual growth, we will naturally encounter conflict. How you choose to resolve conflict is crucial. Keep in mind that conflict is an opportunity for growth.

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18: 15-20)

Below are a few community group roadblocks that often lead to conflict:

- Lack of attendance or commitment;
- Superficiality in sharing;
- Participating in gossip;
- Creating cliques or pairing off within the group

SERVING OTHERS AS A GROUP

As a LifeGroup leader, it's important to encourage the members of your group to passionately employ the gifts, talents and experiences God has entrusted them (Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 10: 25-37). God doesn't need our service, but it gives Him glory and allows us to learn more about His character when we joyfully apply the resources He's given us.

Serving Internally

There are many opportunities available to you at Real Life to serve that range from welcoming people on Sunday mornings and brewing coffee to volunteering with our children's ministry. One of the ways that you can encourage your group to begin to serve is to help each other determine the gifts, talents, and life skills God has given each person in the group. Then, find ways to apply those gifts within the body. Serving internally not only encourages others, but also deepens your connectedness to the body (1 Corinthians 12: 12-27).

Serving Externally

D.L. Moody said, "Out of 100 men, one will read the Bible, the other 99 will read the Christian." To help all of us focus on the world outside our doors, we are sharing with you some ways you can immediately begin serving others and reaching your community for Christ. Many are already involved in missional organizations and missional living, and we celebrate these efforts. If you're not serving externally, we want to help you find new ways to share the love of Christ with the people in your sphere of influence and those outside your circle of comfort.

- **Develop intentional relationships** with the express purpose of demonstrating and speaking Christ's love to others within your sphere of influence:
 - Neighborhood.
 - Workplace.
 - Schools.
 - Sports teams.
 - Workout facilities.
 - Shops and stores you frequent.
- **Take advantage of opportunities** for serving in places outside your circle of comfort as you engage:
 - Neighbors in and around Davis County who are in need of restoration.
 - Ministries that serve the homeless, the poor, and the elderly.
 - Organizations that serve in times of crisis.
 - Believers anywhere who lack basic essentials.
- **Begin to take steps to serve externally by:**
 - Discovering God's passions and how to align your interests, energy, time, and gifts with His. Creatively consider how you could best serve people in our community.
 - Spend time with your community group processing your findings and convictions.
 - Begin to pray for the people you will be serving and for opportunities to share the love of Christ and serve their needs.

LIFEGROUP LEADERS ARE GENEROUS FINANCIALLY AND GOOD STEWARDS OF TIME AS WELL

Stewardship is the way a person manages the resources God has entrusted them. This includes time, money, gifts, and talents. It is important to help your group understand and apply stewardship principles because God calls us to be a good steward with the things He has entrusted to us.

A few biblical examples of financial stewardship include:

- Providing for your family. (1 Timothy 5:8)
- Finding a church body where you can give joyfully. (2 Corinthians 9:7, 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Galatians 6:10, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
- Seeking opportunities to share and give to others. (Hebrews 13:16, 1 Timothy 6:17-18)

As the leader, it is your responsibility to set the example by sharing how you manage your resources.

Outlined below are a few helpful hints:

- Focus on God's Word, not what the world has to say. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Joshua 1:8, 1 Corinthians 3:18-20)
- Recognize that you are a sinner and your stewardship of God's resources could fall victim to this. (Ecclesiastes 7:20, Romans 3:23)
- Enter a stewardship discussion with a teachable spirit, recognizing that most of us still have a lot to learn about financial stewardship. (Luke 14:11, Proverbs 18:15, Psalm 66:18)
- Be open and authentic with your community group in sharing financial details, you will grow more in community than in isolation. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Proverbs 11:14, 13:20, 18:1)
- Encourage others. Remember that the objective is to help one another grow, not to discourage one another. (Luke 6:36, Hosea 6:6, Proverbs 12:18, Psalm 19:14)
- Be committed. (Proverbs 16:3)

Remember that the purpose of sharing is to bring glory to God, become more like Christ and help your group understand and apply stewardship principles. It is bigger than a curriculum or study. It is a lifestyle.

THE THEOLOGY OF APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Ultimately, our growth is dependent upon a work of the Holy Spirit. Paul states, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6) It begins the moment we place our trust in Jesus Christ and continues throughout our lifetime until we are made perfect when either we die or Christ returns (1 Corinthians 6:11; Romans 6:12-13; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). Biblically, our growth in Christ is known as the sanctification process.

As much as our growth is ultimately dependent upon the Holy Spirit, this does not mean that we do not play a role in the growth process. Scripture states: "On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:7-8) **We are called to "discipline" ourselves for the "purpose of godliness."** How do we do this? By practicing the spiritual disciplines.

The spiritual disciplines are habits of devotion that promote godliness. They can be compared to spiritual exercises. "To go to your favorite spot for prayer or journaling, for example, is like going to the gym and using a weight machine. As physical disciplines like this promote strength, so the spiritual disciplines promote godliness." (Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*)

The spiritual disciplines include: Bible intake (reading, studying, meditating, hearing, memorizing), prayer, worship, evangelism, serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning. There are no shortcuts. Practicing these disciplines is essential to spiritual growth. One man has rightly observed: "My central claim is that we can become like Christ by doing one thing—by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in fellowship of his Father." (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*)

Finally, **the Lord uses different circumstances and trials to promote spiritual growth.** Different circumstances in our life promote growth: the home we grew up in, the people we work with, where we happen to relocate for a new job, the schools we attend, etc. are all used by God. (Romans 8:28) We also grow whenever we exercise our spiritual gifts to serve others. (Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Peter 4:7-11; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12) The trials of life that can come from financial pressures, illness, loneliness and various other means (James 1:2-4), help us to grow as well.

Sharing Leadership with Others

As your group grows, you have to grow as a leader. Developing apprentices begins by identifying people in the group who show leadership potential and then actively investing in them. There are three basic principles to consider when developing apprentices:

1. *Choose carefully.* Look for people who make their daily walk with Christ a priority in their lives.
2. *Invest.* Spend time with them outside the group, integrating them into your life. Train them to become competent in the Word and model for them what it takes to effectively lead others.
3. *Delegate responsibilities.* Delegate tasks and responsibilities to give them an opportunity to lead. (Allow them to plan and run a meeting, start meeting with others within the group, go to community group leadership meetings at the church, etc.)

EVALUATING YOUR GROUP

Evaluating the group is vital to measuring a group's pulse. Take the time to walk through the steps outlined below:

- Informal Assessment
 - Every semester, ask yourself and trusted members of the group some of these questions:
 1. *How are you cultivating friendships within the group?*
 2. *Are you regularly discussing the issues and struggles group members are experiencing in their marriages/dating lives?*
 3. *Do you celebrate victories and bear burdens together?*
 2. *Does your group challenge one another to take the next step of faith given their current circumstances and trials?*
 3. *Do you spend time as a group understanding the Bible and its implications for each others' lives?*
 4. *Do you use Scripture and prayer to process the vast majority of issues considered in the group?*
 1. *Are the group members actively serving within the church body?*
 2. *Do you hold each other accountable to reach out to the people on their Impact Card?*
 1. *What specific ways do people demonstrate their love for others?*

Adding New Members

There are two basic ways to add new members to your group. The first is through natural, organic relationships (e.g., a co-worker, a friend from church, a neighbor), and the second way is by having Real Life direct people in need of a group your way.

Before you ask someone to join your group, understand their expectations and commitment level to ensure they line up with your group. Look for common life stage, desires, and life overlap, but remember it is not about finding a certain personality or even maturity level; it is about looking for people who have the same commitment level and expectations for a community group.

Transitioning a LifeGroup

While some groups last for years, others will transition over time for various reasons.

HEALTHY REASONS TO TRANSITION A GROUP:

There are several healthy reasons to transition a group. Some of these include:

- **Answering the call to multiply:** One of our responsibilities as followers in Christ is to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). As Real Life grows, there may come a time when someone from your group feels led to start a group so that others can experience biblical community.
- **Changing life stages:** Transitioning a LifeGroup due to a change in life stage is a healthy reason to end your group (e.g., the addition of children, a change in marital status or a change in geography). Regardless of the change, be sure to process major life change decisions within the group.
- **Lack of commitment:** If your LifeGroup does not view your time together as a priority, then it may be time to make a transition. Be sure to talk about your concerns with the other group members and readdresses each participant's expectations and commitment.

Unhealthy Reasons for a Group to Transition

The most common unhealthy reason to transition a group is from **unresolved conflict**. While conflict can be hard, the Bible calls us to address and resolve conflict. For assistance in resolving conflict, please contact your coach for help with this type of issue.

Transitioning a Group Well

Transitioning a LifeGroup should be a time of reflection, encouragement and celebration. Reflect on and encourage one another with the growth that has occurred and celebrate the many victories and fun memories you have experienced. As the leader, you will set the tone for how your group transitions. The following suggestions will facilitate transitioning a group well:

- **Initiate a conversation.** If your group is considering transitioning, initiate a conversation and talk openly and honestly as a group to ensure everyone is on the same page. Transitioning a group should never come as a surprise to group members.
- **Consider prayerfully.** Take time to pray individually and as a group to address the motivation behind the group transition.
- **Celebrate.** If your LifeGroup decides to make a transition, plan a time to celebrate the time you shared together and reflect on the growth you experienced.
- **Help members find new LifeGroups.** Finding a new community group can be a difficult and stressful venture for some people in your group. If your group is transitioning, it is important to present clearly other options available to group members. Feel free to refer them to other groups or point them to the pastors of Real Life.

SCRIPTURES TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE

WORRY

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. (Philippians 4:6-7)

FEAR

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

STRESS

The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. (Psalm 23:1-3)

WEIGHED DOWN

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.
(1 Peter 5:7)

LOSS OF A JOB

My God will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying." (John 11:25)

Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. (Psalm 23:3-4)

TRUST

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

FAMILY

As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15)

GOD HAS A PLAN

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

GOD CAN DO ANYTHING

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

GOD LOVES US

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow - not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. (Romans 8:38)

GOD IS WITH US

For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." (Hebrews 13:5)

DON'T UNDERSTAND "WHY?"

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. (Isaiah 55:8)

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Romans 8:28)

PROTECTION

The Lord keeps you from all harm and watches over your life. The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever. (Psalm 127:7-8)

HOPE

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

JOY

Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

(2 Corinthians 13:11)

FORGIVENESS

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

CONFLICT

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. (James 4:1-2)

RELATIONSHIPS

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

(Ephesians 4:2)

WORK

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. (Colossians 3:23)

CHOICES

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

OPPORTUNITIES

So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

OVERWHELMED

Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. (Psalm 37:7)

SUCCESS

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually.

Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. (Joshua 1:7-8)

WORDS

Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit - you choose. (Proverbs 18:21)

UNCERTAINTY

Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you. (Psalm 37:5)